

Last Night at the Theaters.

"Silver Girl" at the National Well Received.

"LANCERS" AT THE BELASCO

Lawrence D'Orsay and Cecilia Loftus Entertain Brilliant Audience, Including Mrs. Roosevelt and Party—"A Fool and a Girl" Creditably Played at the Columbia.

The New National—"The Silver Girl."

A fine intellectual and entertaining treat was offered to the large audience that gathered at the New National Theater last night to see the new play, "The Silver Girl," by Mr. Edward Peple. It is a play original in conception; a play of Western characters placed in New York; a play of tense emotional appeal, with a lot of comedy; a play true to life, natural in its dialogue, in which the characters act, talk, and look like real people; a play clean, sweet, wholesome, and entertaining; good to have seen, healthful to the spirit, and showing, above all, that in some such picturesque presentation of phases of true American life lies the large hope of the American drama.

It is hard to think-though comparisons are odious-of a play in recent years so thoroughly American, and at the same time so unexaggerated, so wholesome, and so refreshing. In its force it might remind one of Charles Klein's "The Lion and the Mouse," but it is more natural than that play and less forced. It has some of the best of the Western atmosphere of the dramas that have taken the picturesque West as their theme, but it does not overdo it, and thus spits it, as so many of these earlier plays have done.

And one thing must be said; and that is that there has been nothing but American plays that show such admirable knowledge of the unties of the drama, such close and careful construction, such feeling for the art of dramatic writing as this play of Mr. Peple's. Considered from every point of view, the play is beautifully built. Its story is told straightforwardly, without circumlocution; no indirectness anywhere. It moves on from beginning to end remorselessly and straight; its climaxes are wonders of ingenuity, and the poetic feeling displayed throughout lends the play a literary quality that insures its acceptance at the hands of the American people.

The story of the play is simple. Jefferson Hunter is a middle-aged man who has lived most of his life in Nevada around mining camps. He has acquired a mine, "The Silver Girl," which has practically made his fortune. He has a son and a daughter, both grown, and he has married a young girl in Nevada, a girl older than he is, who has come from the East, and are settling in New York when the play opens. To them comes "Chuck" Wilson, Hunter's mining partner-the character that lends the play its distinctive interest. Chuck is West to the pits and lawyers are called in to draw up the partnership agreement. One of them is Nathan Hargrave, the other Bobby Wanscomb. Living with the Hunters is Miss Julia Raymond, as governess to Agnes, the daughter, though in truth she has to straighten all the family out. It is early seen that young Mrs. Hunter is taken with Hargrave, though it is conveyed in a subtle way. After the lawyer has gone, she turns to "Chuck" and asks him to marry her. "The Silver Girl" is a play that is bound to be remembered, and Washington is fortunate in having an opportunity to see it this early in its career. It is a fine play, and that every one will be the better for having seen it.

RECTOR FULLER.

"How him! Well, now, I didn't take notice particularly of a man from the shoulder-and tells me the truth. I don't care who he is. Now, there's Jeff. He's 'bout the best man in the town. I reckon, but I don't recollect him showin' me no mine medals he's took in a beauty show."

The trouble is that Jeff Hunter, in his spirit of good nature, his fine house and his servants, is always thinking about "God's hills" away out there in Nevada. His young wife, who was a telegraph operator-"because I couldn't learn to be a stenographer," she explains-is in his wife, and she is discordant to the life of New York. Hargrave follows up his first visit by sending flowers to Mrs. Hunter. They are beautiful, but as Hunter says:

"Them roses put me in mind of the people here in New York. They look all right, but they are all right; but they are grown too fast. Out home our flowers come every season by themselves. We take the valley-and we find 'em in the hills. They are sweet-and simple and down-just like a woman. And that's the way they grow in the hills!"

In some dim way, Mrs. Hunter seems to realize what these roses mean as she fondles them, and with a sudden impulse she puts her arm about her sturdy, common husband's neck and cries:

"Oh, take me back to Nevada, Jeff. I'm homesick for the hills. I'm frightened, and I'm homesick for the hills."

The second act finds the Western family established in their new and luxurious New York house. Four love affairs have developed that furnish a lot of the sentimental and humorous elements in the play. Richard Hunter has fallen in love with the governess, and Bobby Wanscomb has fallen in love with Agnes Hunter. Both of these love affairs are beautifully and most aptly developed. In the meantime Hargrave has been making great headway with Mrs. Hunter. He has been taking her to the opera, her constant companion. She has not quite understood all that he means, perhaps, but she has gone very far. Suddenly, there arrives from the West Chuck Wilson to bring the news that "The Silver Girl" mine has been jumped, and that practically Jefferson Hunter is ruined unless he can re-establish himself. It is Hargrave, doing, of course! The boy and the girl take the bad news-the news that all the gay life of New York is over for them-fine. The hard task for Jefferson is to break it to his wife. It is Hargrave who breaks it to her, it appears. She has been so admired; life, this sort of life, has meant so much to her, and though Jefferson promises her that it will not be for long, that he will soon make money enough to come back, she is so lonely, and gives him no comfort. The end of the second act finds her facing what Jefferson has to-

"A cabin in the hills! After this! Good God, I can't!"

The third act shows the same house the next morning. Jefferson Hunter and Chuck Wilson have left the house an hour before, bound for the West. The children and the young wife are to follow. But Hargrave comes to take her to the opera, and she is to elope with him to Europe-and luxury, rather than a cabin in the hills. The subway train is out of order and the two men miss their train and return to the house. In the meantime the governess has overheard the plan of elopement and informs Jefferson Hunter. He waits for the couple to return. When he first came to New York he had been arrested for carrying two revolvers, and the judge who had dismissed him had wrapped up the guns on condition that Hunter should not unwrap them until he was out of the State. Jefferson takes them from his bag in the original bundle. "I reckon," he says, "when I understand," he says. When Hargrave and Mrs. Hunter return, Jefferson faces them and there is a dramatic duel, in which Hargrave misses and Jef-

erson refuses to fire. It sounds, as written here, as if it were melodramatic, but in the play, simple, and dignified, and it holds the audience in a most intense interest.

The last act shifts to the mountains of Nevada. Through the efforts of Bobby Wanscomb, the two partners have recovered the mine, and in fortune in their grasp. But it is empty to Jefferson. It is in vain that Wilson tries to gloss things over. Says he:

"Chuck! I stood behind that curtain and I heard his argument for her. He knifed me every word of it. He said he was nothing but the damnablest truth. I had given her all I had-but it wasn't enough. She had seen life-and needed what I couldn't give. For me-the deal was over."

Of course, it was not over, for she comes to him, the governess with her, explaining how the young wife was only a girl still and had lost her head, and had been tempted-but had come back, and the heart-broken man, whose life had been so empty with her, opens his arms to her, dusty and tired from her long ride through the mountains, and not one word of reproach or of bitterness-only the open arms, into which she throws herself with a cry, and as he strokes her beautiful hair he says-it is his welcome home!

"Honey-did you notice when you came along how the birds was whistling?"

On such a tender note as that the curtain falls and the play is done. It is a beautiful play, a play of straight, direct, vital. It deals with no intricate problems of right or wrong, of morals or of immorality. It is a clean, open-air story, that reaches the heart and makes one feel kinder toward humanity and more hopeful of life in general. It is a play that one feels inclined to thank heaven for; that it is American-genuine, characteristically American. Mr. Peple has done great work!

Nothing is to be desired. Only a small cast is required, and each member is picked. The excellent part of Jefferson Hunter is well played by Mr. George Fawcett. A man in the prime of life and an actor of wide experience, he has learned admirably the value of repression, and the strength of his quiet acting was worthy of all praise. Scenes that ranting would inevitably have spoiled he got full poetic value out of by his fine reserve. His voice is wonderfully sympathetic and fine, and his facial expression does much to render the meaning of the lines he speaks. From beginning to end it was a masterly performance. Miss Jane Oaker shares with Mr. Fawcett the honors of the piece as Mrs. Hunter. She plays the part of a Western-bred girl in an Eastern environment with rare subtlety and skill, and in the emotional passages she rose to every requirement, save, perhaps, at the end of the act, where more force might have been added to the verisimilitude of the tense situation.

Very clever, too, was the work of Miss Consuelo Bailey, a charming ingenue, who played the part of the young wife, and of a schoolgirl. Her work was delightful in every sense. Mr. Norman Tharp, who played opposite to her, well deserved the applause he received for his conscientious and able acting.

A markedly clever performance was that of the governess, played by Miss Lillian Albertson. She has a striking personality and a voice of such charm that every line she uttered was received with intense sympathy by the audience. Mr. George Nash did very well as Hargrave, though his work was not striking, and there is a harshness about his playing which makes one wonder whether Mrs. Hunter could not have chosen a more attractive lover. The "Chuck" Wilson of Mr. Charles Warren was a clever piece of character acting, and an excellent bit of the play. Mr. Harry Lifford, Altogether, the company was most adequate, and gave the play its full value.

Scientifically, the play is all that can be desired, and the beauty of the setting of the last act evoked applause before ever a line was spoken.

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"The Belasco-"The Lancers."

"The Lancers," a military comedy with musical interpolations, with Lawrence D'Orsay and Cecilia Loftus in the leading roles, was mounted at the Belasco Theater before a brilliant audience, including Mrs. Roosevelt and party. The play is an adaptation from the German, and was first produced by Augustin Daly under the title "The Passing Regiment," being afterward presented in London as "Our Regiment." The essence of the comedy remains the same, the locale only being changed; in the first instance the scenes being laid at Newport, and in the present case the episodes occur in Quebec.

The opening of the story finds the romantic old French town all expectant over the arrival of the Seventeenth Lancers, a crack regiment, en route through the colony. The officers are quartered as guests with the prominent citizens, M. d'Estere receiving the colonel, which necessitates the presence of the staff, among the number being Lieut. Gordon Willoughby, who is instantly recognized by Lonia Ivanoff, the Russian niece of the host, as the man with whom she had fallen in love at first sight at a Parisian boarding school. She attempted to recall herself to her recollection, but he has forgotten; and a certain Capt. Cecil Fitzherbert also comes with the regiment, and falls instantly in love with her, thus furnishing the basis of the major part of the comedy. The whole play is an argument in favor of the lasting effect of love at first sight, this conclusion being indicated by the happy conclusion of the affair. The second act is almost entirely devoted to musical interpolations of pleasing quality, rendered by Miss Loftus, Mr. D'Orsay, and company, the most effective being "If Love Cometh Not," "The Voodoo Man," and "The Fairies," by Miss Loftus, and "Capt. d'Arcy," by Mr. D'Orsay. At the close Miss Loftus spoke a dainty little epilogue apropos of the dominant theme of the play.

Aside from her vocal attainments, Miss Loftus finds the character of Lonia Ivanoff, a spirited Russian girl, very much suited to her temperament. She believes in her theory as regards first-sight love, and although almost dissuaded by her host's indifference, and determining to teach him a lesson, she at least harks back to her heart's first prompting, and succeeds entirely in winning his entire affection. The idea is very clearly set forth by the author and very daintily exemplified by the actress.

Mr. D'Orsay plays a character in consistent keeping with his previous successful efforts. He is a dandy, somewhat dandyish English officer, with slow moving humorous propensities, yet with the element of true manhood underneath it all. Despite the atmosphere of sameness which accrues to Mr. D'Orsay's impersonation, he has a droll way of speaking new lines and a method of quaint-

ness in carrying out the action which together always compel the auditor to yield in a humorous sense.

The cast is truly remarkable for the number of handsome men on the list, who not only have the advantage of fine physical aspects, but also have the virtue of acting power and the art of effective elocution. Principal among them is Mr. A. V. Van Buren, appearing as Lieut. Gordon Willoughby. He carries his role with a grace and ease, especially strong in the crucial closing scene. Others are Mr. Wilfred North, as Col. Trevelyan, who contributes convincing acting power and splendid physique; good Mr. Hubert Harlan as Surgeon Sparling; Mr. Ben Field contributes a character sketch full of unctuous comedy as Dr. Crystal, and Mr. Fred Taylor, as Mr. d'Estere, and Mr. Arthur Lawrence, as Mr. Marsh, are likewise very entertaining.

The women of the cast are capable in portraying subsidiary parts, most of the action being sustained by the men, with Miss Loftus' assistance. The list includes Miss Lillian Albertson, as Lonia; Miss Phoebe Coyne, as Mrs. Marsh; Miss Eileen Anglin, as Ruth Fellows, and Miss Lolita Roberts, as Nina Marsh.

Lit all of the comedies which appeared at the same period, the lines of this play are remarkably bright and witty, with consistent but not strenuous action, and always with some basis of sentiment underlying the whole. The entire piece is clean and satisfying, in a lighter sense, and in this case, a harking back for twenty years or more certainly produces enjoyable results; in fact, if a few more of those sterling old comedies were resurrected under such favorable auspices as the present one, the result would undoubtedly be more pleasing than in the majority of the cases where we fly to evils we know not of.

"A Fool and a Girl" at the Columbia Theater.

Mr. James K. Hackett, to whom is due much that is creditable on our stage, has unearthed and placed confidence in a new play, David Wark Griffin, who has heretofore enjoyed some fame as a short-story writer, and whose name now appears as the author of "A Fool and a Girl," which was produced last night at the Columbia Theater for the first time anywhere.

Mr. Griffin has laid his play in California to-day, introducing his characters amid the drabs and hangers-on of the "Bull Pup" Cafe. The "girl" is the youngest and least virtuous of the two, and into the cafe, flushed with new wealth, comes the "fool." The sister of the "girl" makes a try for him, but finding that his old-fashioned principles have taught him to look upon her like with abhorrence, bids her trap with the "girl," who agrees to play the sweet simplicity for the sake of the "fool's" money. They meet in the hop fields of the San Jose Mission, and when the girl finds him intent on marrying her, she consents to a swift elopement, and she has done so, and incidentally loves in return. Her self-sacrifice and eventual happiness are worked out on entirely new lines, in a new and resourceful way, the plot developing at each turn some clever surprise.

The leading part of Albert Holly, the Kentucky, played by John W. Dean, the searcher for an ideal, although introduced to the audience pretty well under the influence of the play, the attention from the first. No fool was ever more happy in his folly, or so lovable, and his very natural and boyish resentment, when he discovers that he has been deceived, was stirred by the play. Fanny Ward, in the part of Effie, the girl, also made a decidedly favorable impression. It shares with the play the handicap of too quickly interchangeable coloring, requiring an insight into almost every known element of the feminine heart. Miss Ward is better in her earlier and lighter scenes than when she strives for the high peaks of sentiment. Her acting, however, is of a high order, and familiarity with the exigencies of the plot will work wonders with its delineation.

Alison Skipworth has another of her clever roles in the woman of the streets who sacrifices her all for her little sister, and the balance of the cast, including Frank Wunderlich, as Mike Dehota, and Helen Greene, as Mrs. Kelly, is an admirably selected one, and needs very little further training to work together harmoniously. The scenery and costumes are excellent, and the special beautiful being a view of the hop fields with the pickers at work.

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The leading part of Albert Holly, the Kentucky, played by John W. Dean, the searcher for an ideal, although introduced to the audience pretty well under the influence of the play, the attention from the first. No fool was ever more happy in his folly, or so lovable, and his very natural and boyish resentment, when he discovers that he has been deceived, was stirred by the play. Fanny Ward, in the part of Effie, the girl, also made a decidedly favorable impression. It shares with the play the handicap of too quickly interchangeable coloring, requiring an insight into almost every known element of the feminine heart. Miss Ward is better in her earlier and lighter scenes than when she strives for the high peaks of sentiment. Her acting, however, is of a high order, and familiarity with the exigencies of the plot will work wonders with its delineation.

Alison Skipworth has another of her clever roles in the woman of the streets who sacrifices her all for her little sister, and the balance of the cast, including Frank Wunderlich, as Mike Dehota, and Helen Greene, as Mrs. Kelly, is an admirably selected one, and needs very little further training to work together harmoniously. The scenery and costumes are excellent, and the special beautiful being a view of the hop fields with the pickers at work.

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The cast is truly remarkable for the number of handsome men on the list, who not only have the advantage of fine physical aspects, but also have the virtue of acting power and the art of effective elocution. Principal among them is Mr. A. V. Van Buren, appearing as Lieut. Gordon Willoughby. He carries his role with a grace and ease, especially strong in the crucial closing scene. Others are Mr. Wilfred North, as Col. Trevelyan, who contributes convincing acting power and splendid physique; good Mr. Hubert Harlan as Surgeon Sparling; Mr. Ben Field contributes a character sketch full of unctuous comedy as Dr. Crystal, and Mr. Fred Taylor, as Mr. d'Estere, and Mr. Arthur Lawrence, as Mr. Marsh, are likewise very entertaining.

The women of the cast are capable in portraying subsidiary parts, most of the action being sustained by the men, with Miss Loftus' assistance. The list includes Miss Lillian Albertson, as Lonia; Miss Phoebe Coyne, as Mrs. Marsh; Miss Eileen Anglin, as Ruth Fellows, and Miss Lolita Roberts, as Nina Marsh.

Lit all of the comedies which appeared at the same period, the lines of this play are remarkably bright and witty, with consistent but not strenuous action, and always with some basis of sentiment underlying the whole. The entire piece is clean and satisfying, in a lighter sense, and in this case, a harking back for twenty years or more certainly produces enjoyable results; in fact, if a few more of those sterling old comedies were resurrected under such favorable auspices as the present one, the result would undoubtedly be more pleasing than in the majority of the cases where we fly to evils we know not of.

"A Fool and a Girl" at the Columbia Theater.

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